Amendments to the Claims

1.   (Amended) A method of providing an animated viewing companion on a display while a viewer is watching a program, the method comprising the steps of:

displaying a video program on the display;

generating an animated character on a portion of the display as the animated viewing companion;

monitoring at least one signal corresponding to the program being watched;

determining, based on the monitoring performed in the monitoring step, when a first predetermined event has occurred;

wherein the first predetermined event comprises at least one of an audio and video event in the program being watched; and

controlling the animated character based on the determination made in the determining step so that the animated character responds to the at least one of an audio and video event in the program being watched.

2.   (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

determining, based on the monitoring performed in the monitoring step, when a second predetermined event has occurred,

wherein, in the controlling step, control of the animated character is also based on the determination that the second predetermined event has occurred.

3.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein, in the displaying step, the video program is displayed in a first predetermined region of the display, and wherein, in the generating step, the animated character is generated in a second predetermined region of the display.

4.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one signal monitored in the monitoring step comprises an audio signal.

5.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one signal monitored in the monitoring step comprises an audio signal and a video signal.

6.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one signal monitored in the monitoring step comprises a video signal.

7.   (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

accepting at least one input from the user; and

controlling the animated character based on the inputs accepted in the accepting step.

8.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein a behavior of the animated character depends on a cumulative history of inputs accepted from the user.

9.   (Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the animated character generated in the generating step has its back facing the viewer, and

wherein the controlling step controls the animated character so that the animated character responds to the at least one of an audio and video event in the program being watched by comprises the step of turning the animated character so that its face faces the viewer.

10.   (Amended) A method of providing an animated viewing companion on a display while a viewer is watching a program, the program having an audio component and a synchronized video component, the method comprising the steps of:

displaying the video component of the program on the display;

generating an animated character on a portion of the display as the animated viewing companion;

determining, based on a signal corresponding to <u>at least one of the audio and</u> <u>video components in the program being watched</u> ~~the audio component of the program,~~ when a first predetermined ~~audio~~ event has occurred;

~~determining, based on the signal corresponding to the audio component of the program, when a second predetermined audio event has occurred;~~ and

controlling the animated character based on the determinations made in the determining steps <u>so that the animated character responds to the at least one of an audio</u> <u>and video event in the program being watched.</u>

11   (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the signal corresponding to the audio component of the program is an analog signal.

12.   (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the first predetermined audio event comprises a sudden loud sound, and

wherein, based on the determination of when the first predetermined audio event has occurred, the animated character is controlled, in the controlling step, to act surprised.

13.   (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the first predetermined audio event comprises a laughing sound, and

wherein, based on the determination of when the first predetermined audio event has occurred, the animated character is controlled, in the controlling step, to laugh.

14.   (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the animated character generated in the generating step has its back facing the viewer, and

wherein the controlling step comprises the step of turning the animated character so that its face faces the viewer.

15.   (Amended) A method of providing an animated character on a display while a viewer interfaces with a program recommendation system, the method comprising the steps of:

generating an animated character on the display as an animated viewing companion;

accepting a selection of a program from a user;

comparing the selection accepted in the accepting step to a stored profile, wherein the stored profile is based on previously made program selections; and

controlling the animated character based on the comparison made in the comparing step.

16.   (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein the comparing step comprises the step of determining whether the selection accepted in the accepting step is consistent with the stored profile; and

wherein, in the controlling step, the animated character is controlled to generate an approval response when it is determined, in the determining step, that the selection is consistent with the stored profile.

17.   (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein, a degree of consistency of the selection with the stored profile is determined in the determining step; and

wherein, in the controlling step, the animated character is controlled to generate one of a plurality of approval responses indicating different degrees of approval depending on the degree of consistency of the selection with the stored profile.

18.   (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein the comparing step comprises the step of determining whether the selection accepted in the accepting step is inconsistent with the stored profile; and

wherein, in the controlling step, the animated character is controlled to generate a disapproval response when it is determined, in the determining step, that the selection is inconsistent with the stored profile.

19.   (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein the comparing step comprises the step of determining whether the selection accepted in the accepting step is inconsistent with the stored profile; and

wherein, in the controlling step, the animated character is controlled to generate a disapproval response when it is determined, in the determining step, that the selection is inconsistent with the stored profile.

20.   (New) The method of claim 1, wherein:

the controlling step comprises controlling the animated character to transition from a normal TV-watching animation to one of a plurality of other animations when the determining step determines that the first predetermined event has occurred in the program being watched.

21.   (New) The method of claim 20, wherein:

the plurality of other animations includes a frightened animation, a happy animation, and a laughing animation.

22.   (New) The method of claim 10, wherein:

the controlling step comprises controlling the animated character to transition from a normal TV-watching animation to one of a plurality of other animations when the determining step determines that the first predetermined event has occurred in the program being watched.

23.   (New) The method of claim 22, wherein:

the plurality of other animations includes a frightened animation, a happy animation, and a laughing animation.